



virtual japanese conversational language exchange

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Japanese Cultural and
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**Beginner and Intermediate
Japanese Language Lesson
with Dr. Lisa Hofmann-Kuroda**

**J-Chat Session 15
Friday, July 22, 2022**

Virtual Japanese Language Exchange

JCCCNC / JETAANC

July 22, 2022 7月22日2022年

Today's Beginner Lesson: Short vs Long Form

In polite Japanese, it's normal to use the “long form” of the verb, sometimes called the **ます** form (-masu form). But in casual settings, the “short form” of the verb is also frequently used.

Ex: To eat

Long Form: **たべます** (tabemasu)

Short Form: **たべる** (taberu)

Today's Beginner Lesson: Short vs Long Form

If we want to make the verb negative, it looks like this:

Long Form: たべません tabemasen

Short Form: たべない tabenai

Today's Beginner Lesson: Short vs Long Form

(Between friends) A : 今日、学校に行く？ (Short form)
きょう がっこう い
Are you going to school today?

B : ううん、行かない。
い
No, I'm not.

(To a stranger) A : すみません、この電車は新宿に行きますか。 (Long form)
でんしゃ しんじゅく い
Excuse me, does this train go to Shinjuku?

B : いいえ、行きませんよ。
い
No, it doesn't.

Today's Beginner Lesson: Short vs Long Form

(Between Friends)

A: Kyo, gakkō ni iku? (Short Form / Are you going to school today?)

B: Uun, ikanai (Short Form / No I'm not)

(To a Stranger)

A: Sumimasen, kono densha wa Shinjuku ni ikimaska? (Long form / does this train go to Shinjuku?)

B: Iie, ikimasenyo (Long form / No it doesn't)

Today's Beginner Lesson: Short vs Long Form

Notice how in short form, we rely on the intonation at the end of the sentence to indicate whether it is a question or answer, since the form of the verb doesn't change:

Kyo, gakko ni **iku**? (Are you going to school today?)

Un, **iku**. (Yes, I'll go)

In long form, the presence or absence of “ka” at the end of the sentence indicates whether or not it's a question

Kyo, gakko ni ikimasu**ka**? (Are you going to school today?)

Hai, ikimasu (Yes, I'll go)

Today's Beginner Lesson: Short vs Long Form

In the casual conversations, you drop the question particle か, and use the rising intonation to ask a question.⁴

どんな音楽を聞く？ (×どんな音楽を聞くか？)
おんがく き おんがく き

What kind of music do you listen to?

Donna ongaku o kiku?

X You can't say Donna ongaku wo kiku ka

Today's Beginner Lesson: Short vs Long Form

1. 今日、勉強する？ Kyo, benkyo suru? / Are you going to study today?
きょう べんきょう
2. 今日、友達に会う？ Kyo, tomodachi ni au? / Are you meeting friends today?
きょう とも あ
3. よくお茶を飲む？ Yoku ocha o nomu? / Do you drink tea a lot?
 ちゃ の

If you were to say these in long form they would be:

Kyo, benkyo shimasuka?

Kyo, tomodachi ni aimasuka?

Yoku ocha w nominasuka?

Today's Beginner Lesson: Short vs Long Form

4. よく電車でんしゃに乗のる？ Yoku densha ni noru? / Do you ride the train a lot?
5. 毎日まいにち、日本語にほんごを話はなす？ Mainichi nihongo o hanasu? / Do you speak Japanese every day?
6. 毎日まいにち、お風呂ふろに入はいる？ Mainichi ofuro ni hairu? / Do you take a bath every day?

If you were to say these in long form they would be:

Yoku densha ni norimasuka?

Mainichi nihongo w hanashimasuka?

Mainichi ofuro ni hairimasuka?

Today's Beginner Lesson: Short vs Long Form

It may not be easy to decide when it is appropriate to switch to short forms. First of all, Japanese speakers are often very conscious of seniority. A year's difference in age may in many cases totally preclude the possibility of establishing a truly "equal" relationship. Second, license to use short forms is not mutual; senior partners may feel perfectly justified in using short forms while expecting their junior partners to continue addressing them with long forms. Thus, if somebody who is older, say, your Japanese language professor, talks to you using short forms, they would be greatly surprised if you were to do the same.